

CLAIM AMENDMENTS

1. (previously presented) A method comprising:

determining at a data center whether to inform a user of an interactive television service of alternate content, the user connected with the data center via a network;

responsive to determining to inform the user of the alternate content, generating a hot key signal indicating availability of the alternate content; and

inserting the hot key signal into a content signal transmitted to the user from the head-end and data center via the network;

wherein the determining is independent of any request by the user for the alternate content, but based at least in part on a search for alternate content having subject matter that is related to subject matter of content being viewed by the user when the search is conducted.

2. (previously presented) The method of claim 1, wherein determining at the data center whether to inform the user of the interactive television service of alternate content is based on results of a search of programming information.

3. (previously presented) The method of claim 2, wherein determining at the data center whether to inform the user of the interactive television service of alternate further comprises performing a search of one or more Internet web sites.

4. (previously presented) The method of claim 3, wherein performing the search of one or more web sites comprises using the results of the search of programming information.

5. (previously presented) The method of claim 1, wherein determining at the data center whether to inform the user of the interactive television service of alternate

content is based on information received during generation of programming information.

6. (previously presented) The method of claim 1, wherein the hot key signal comprises an Internet Protocol (IP) data packet, the Internet Protocol data packet having a header portion and a body portion, the body portion having a data field indicating a location of the available content.

7. (previously presented) The method of claim 6, wherein the Internet Protocol data packet is transmitted from the data center as an Internet Protocol multicast to the user via the network.

8. (previously presented) A data center comprising:

a hot key generation portion to determine whether to inform a user of an interactive television service of alternate content, the user connected with the data center via a network and responsive to determining to inform the user of the alternate content, generating a hot key signal indicating availability of the alternate content;

a multiplexor system to insert the hot key signal into a content signal; and

a transport system to transmit the content signal and the hot key signal to the user from the data center via the network;

wherein the hot key generation portion determines whether to inform the user of alternate content independent of any request by the user for the alternate content, but based at least in part on a search for alternate content having subject matter that is related to subject matter of content being viewed by the user when the search is conducted.

9. (previously presented) The data center of claim 8, wherein the hot key generation portion comprises means for determining whether to inform the user of the interactive television service of alternate content based on results of a search of programming information.

10. (previously presented) The data center of claim 9, wherein the hot key generation portion comprises means for determining whether to inform the user of the interactive television service of alternate content by performing a search of one or more Internet web sites.

11. (previously presented) The data center of claim 10, wherein the hotkey generation portion further comprises means for performing the search of one or more web sites using the results of the search of programming information.

12. (previously presented) The data center of claim 8, wherein the hot key generation portion comprises means for determining whether to inform the user of the interactive television service of alternate content based on information received during generation of programming information.

13. (previously presented) The data center of claim 8, wherein the hot key signal comprises an Internet Protocol (IP) data packet, the Internet Protocol data packet having a header portion and a body portion, the body portion having a data field indicating a location of the alternate content.

14. (previously presented) The data center of claim 13, wherein the Internet Protocol data packet is transmitted from the data center as an Internet Protocol multicast to the user via the network.

15. (previously presented) A machine-readable medium having stored thereon a series of instructions, the instructions, when executed by a processor, cause the processor to:

determine at a data center whether to inform a user of an interactive television service of alternate content, the user connected with the data center via a network;

responsive to determining to inform the user of the alternate content, generate a hot key signal indicating availability of the alternate content; and

insert the hot key signal into a content signal transmitted to the user from the data center via the network,

wherein the instructions cause the processor to determine whether to inform the user of alternate content independent of any request by the user for the alternate content, but based at least in part on a search for alternate content having subject matter related to subject matter of content being viewed by the user when the search is conducted.

16. (previously presented) The machine-readable medium of claim 15, wherein the instructions cause the processor to determine whether to inform the user of the interactive television service of alternate content based on results of a search of programming information.

17. (previously presented) The machine-readable medium of claim 16, wherein the instructions cause the processor to determine whether to inform the user of the interactive television service of alternate content based further on results of a search of one or more Internet web sites.

18. (previously presented) The machine-readable medium of claim 17, wherein the instructions cause the processor to perform the search of one or more web sites using the results of the search of programming information.

19. (previously presented) The machine-readable medium of claim 15, wherein the instructions cause the processor to determine whether to inform the user of the interactive television service of alternate content based on information received during generation of programming information.

20. (previously presented) The machine-readable medium of claim 15, wherein the hot key signal comprises an Internet Protocol (IP) data packet, the Internet Protocol data packet having a header portion and a body portion, the body portion having a data field indicating a location of the alternate content.

21. (previously presented) The machine-readable medium of claim 20, wherein the Internet Protocol data packet is transmitted from the data center as an Internet Protocol multicast to the user via the network.